



Department of Microbiology
and Immunology
School of Medicine
The Center for the Health Sciences
Los Angeles, California 90024

February 28, 1978

Dr. Joshua Lederberg
Department of Genetics
School of Medicine
Stanford University
Stanford, California 94305

Dear Josh:

Thank you for your kind letter of February 14. I was, indeed, an early believer in the importance of DNA, so much so that I was trying to convince you at the 1946 Cold Spring Harbor Symposium that your recombination in E. coli is only a transformation. But I have no recollection of the debate with Lwoff or Delbruck on this subject. I don't have any written material on the reception of Avery's discovery in 1944. I only remember that Demerec told me about it in 1944; we were both very intrigued but still cautious. However, in 1946 I was already working (under Chargaff) on isolation of DNA from yeast (which up to that time was believed to contain only RNA ("yeast nucleic acid")); thus, Chargaff and I became early adherents to the glory of DNA. Then, around 1948 our lab obtained chromatographic evidence that DNA is not a tetranucleotide. As you know, Mirsky and all the protein boys were the opponents: to them, in 1948 DNA was still just a prosthetic group.

Please do not hesitate to write to me if I can be of any historical help.

With best regards,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Steve".

Stephen Zamenhof, Ph.D.
Professor of Microbial
Genetics and Biological
Chemistry

SZ:jf